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The Women's Quarterly

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Listen Up, America... June Cleaver Wants Flex Time

Also in this issue: Christina Hoff Sommers and Dave Shiflett

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Diary

My Day in Court

SURELY, there were tasteful folk in the Elizabethan era, who bewailed the carnival-like atmosphere associated with public hangings —the vendors hawking their wares, the spectators jostling for a good vantage point from which to view the grisly proceedings, the morbid curiosity about the condemned man's demeanor on the brink of death.

Still, they *were* spared the mawkish musings of Phil Donahue. The former talk show host, an opponent of the death penalty, took to the airwaves to propound his beliefs on the recent occasion of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh's rendezvous with destiny. That Girl's mop-topped mate opined—to the consternation of a Baptist preacher who was on the show advocating the death penalty—that Christians are especially obligated to oppose it because their founder was an innocent victim of capital punishment. But McVeigh *was* guilty, Phil.

McVeigh's execution arouses in our day that same "horrid eagerness" about the "melancholy spectacle" that led James Boswell in the eighteenth century to visit Tyburn, the famous London gallows, to observe a hanging. Such prurience nowadays is dressed up in sentimental frippery: People are said to want something called "closure."

As for me, I only rejoiced that justice had been done. Shortly before McVeigh's execution, I was summoned for possible jury duty. The case was a big deal because one of the defendants, a thirty-two-year-old drug lord charged with ordering eleven murders, was on trial for his life. The District of Columbia doesn't have the death penalty, but this trial was in federal district court. The defendants sat at a long table with a phalanx of defense lawyers. Because the death penalty was a possibility, our views were scrutinized in a sixty-page questionnaire.

By the time I arrived in the portrait-lined courtroom, more than 350 possible jurors already had been excluded from serving on the jury because of opposition to the death penalty. On the questionnaire, I wrote that I believe in the death penalty "totally, passionately, ardently, and with my whole heart," adding for emphasis that, if I owned an automobile, I'd want a bumper sticker reading, "Fry 'Em."

Inspired by the notion that, for once, my readers might regard my opinions as a matter of life or death, I replied to the question about how well the jury system works with another question: "Does the name O. J. Simpson ring a bell?" They even wanted to know our TV viewing habits! Did we watch *Law & Order* or *NYPD Blue*? I suppose they figured that those of us who regularly tune in for assistant DA Jack McCoy's courtroom battles might be wise to the ways of defense attorneys. *Blue* fans might be willing to wink at a smidgen of violence used to obtain confessions.

When I was young and foolish, I was against the death penalty, even after interviewing a death row inmate in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, whose attempt to feign contrition lacked conviction. A few years later, I interviewed another death row inmate. He seemed even less remorseful than the former one, lecturing me that the state had no right to take his life. He had killed two women. My opposition to the "uncivilized" death penalty began to crack. I eventually came to agree with radio host Dennis Prager's assertion that "allowing all murderers to keep their lives diminishes the worth of human life." The two men I met on death row would have been morally better off preparing to meet their maker instead of writing Amnesty International every time a prison guard looked askance, as one of them was wont to do.

People will tell you that capital punishment is not a deterrent. I don't care. It would be immoral, in my opinion, to execute somebody as an example. The only reason for the death penalty is that there are acts so heinous that it is the only just response.

I WOULD NOT WANT to live in a world where everybody believed in capital punishment. I am glad capital punishment is still debated, and this discussion deserves to be continued until the end of time. The freeing of a number of convicts through the use of DNA is obviously a good thing. For me, though, it simply means that the system works.

I was called back to federal court a few days after answering the questions and told that I had been eliminated from the jury pool on the basis of my questionnaire. Was it my devotion to *NYPD Blue*?

~Charlotte Hays

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The Women's Quarterly

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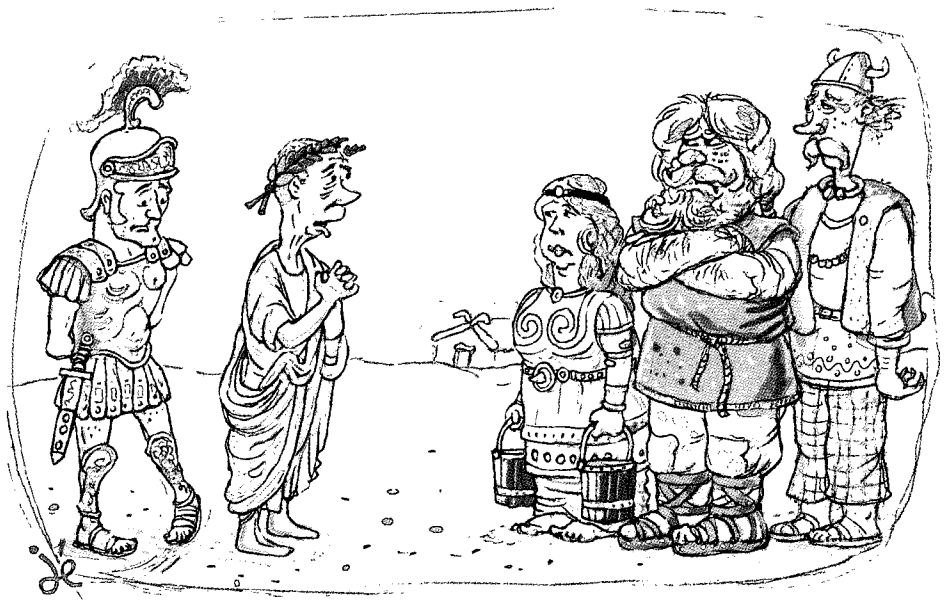

"I came. I saw. I conquered. I apologize."

Cover by Sandy McClelland; Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé

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The Write Stuff

Handwriting is a basic skill that serves us all our lives. Unfortunately, it's not being taught in schools today. ***Christina Hoff Sommers*** shows why this is especially bad for boys.

THERE ARE exceptions, but here is the rule: Boys are graphologically challenged. That males have many more problems with penmanship than females is "not even a question," according to University of Maryland special education professor and distinguished scholar Steve Graham. "It is one of the better established facts in the literature." Handwriting is a basic skill that serves us all our lives. Unfortunately, a problem that primarily affects boys is rarely on anyone's list of educational priorities. This one could be solved readily enough, if schools would take the pains they once took to inculcate good handwriting.

Two powerful groups have opposed the teaching of penmanship—the techno-enthusiasts and the progressive educators. The former regard handwriting as a quaint relic of the past; the latter believe handwriting instruction inhibits a child's creativity and spontaneity.

The techno-optimists have been around a long time. Since the invention of the typewriter in the 1870s, experts have predicted the imminent demise of handwriting. With each new innovation—the telephone, the Dictaphone, the tape recorder—technology enthusiasts have declared the end of penmanship. "Hand-writing nowadays is as out-of-date as the hand-lettered book," according to a 1956 article in *Look* magazine. Thirty years later, in a 1986 article in *Classroom Computer Learning*, a middle school teacher wrote, "Right now we may be living in the last days of the pencil-and-paper age."

But here we are in the new millennium, and the last days of pen and paper have not yet arrived. Children are still required to bring pencils to class. Adults continue to fill out forms, address letters, and sign their names—all by hand—on a daily basis. Prospective employers look at handwriting samples for signs of instability. College entrance exams now include a handwritten essay. Even technology is going in the direction of making more demands on handwriting skills. The latest generation of cyber notebooks and Palm Pilots includes a radical innovation that requires the user to enter information, not with a keyboard or joystick, not by talking to the machine, but by using a small writing instrument—a pen.

"I have no idea what I meant," said my bewildered sixteen-year-old David, struggling to decipher class notes he himself had written, but which now ap-

 Drawing and hand lettering by Dusan Petricic

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peared to him like something in ancient Akkadian. My son is untroubled by his messy handwriting: "It doesn't matter," he assures me. "I do most of my work on the computer." But whenever I look through his notebooks, I see page after page of class notes, homework assignments, and in-class exams in his manic scrawl. Even in the information age, penmanship remains a basic and essential skill; but it is not a skill that my son was ever trained to master. And he is far from atypical.

Techno-enthusiasts can be reasoned with. Show them evidence that children are harmed by poor handwriting and they will relent. Progressive educators are the more steely-minded opponents of teaching handwriting. For they quite sincerely believe that the "penmanship regime" is stultifying for children. They favor a "whole language" methodology that discourages teachers from the instruction of subjects such as phonics, grammar, spelling, and penmanship. They want children immersed in a rich and exciting language environment that will stimulate their curiosity and imagination and lead them naturally toward literacy, clarity, and legible writing. Here is an early (1957) expression of their philosophy from a Brooklyn College professor, writing in the journal *Elementary English*:

"When he feels deeply about his experience patterns, he will not only write well he will want to write correctly. The habit of correct writing is best achieved when the child wants *desperately* to communicate experience" (his emphasis).

This is the kind of wishful jargon we were to hear for the next forty years. How the habit of correct writing can be achieved out of a desperate desire to communicate, but without training, is not explained. Nor does it happen. If the improvement of boys' penmanship depends on their "feeling deeply" about their "experience patterns," most will remain maladroit, if not illegible.

By the early 1980s whole language theory was dominant in schools of education and professional associations, and the direct instruction of phonics, grammar, spelling, and penmanship was out of favor. The unhappy effects on children's reading skills are familiar. Less known are the effects of the lack of handwriting instruction on writing skills. The progressive prejudice against teaching handwriting was many times articulated. Here is whole language proponent Professor Donald Graves in a 1978 "research update" for the National Council of Teachers of English: "Handwriting was one of those early school experiences I have tried to repress.... [I]t was punishing, mindless, and mechanical whereas composing with ideas was lofty and worthwhile."

A few years later a first-grade teacher would write, "I know Donald Graves says not to worry about handwriting; it will come. But I can't help wonder if it really will, so I teach handwriting.... I just see these kids struggling, almost making marks instead of letters. How can they learn to write legibly?"

In fact, many of them, especially boys, do not learn to write legibly. There are, of course, many examples of great men with questionable penmanship. Try deciphering a handwritten line from Sir Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, or John F. Kennedy. But these men had compensating assets—including great wealth and distinguished schooling. What about the average boy?

Handwriting is not correlated with IQ. (One 1985 study of second graders found a negative correlation!) But it does appear to be strongly correlated with grades. Several studies have confirmed that, when teachers are asked to grade papers of comparable quality, those that are neatly written get higher marks. As education scholar Pamela Farris reported in *Language Arts* (1991), "Illegible or poor handwriting can hinder students in getting fair and objective grades from their teachers .... [T]he quality of students' handwriting influences how teachers evaluate papers; students with better handwriting receive higher grades than those with poor handwriting."

Standardized tests do not usually include handwritten answers, and boys tend to do better on them than girls. This has led several women's groups to accuse the tests of being gender-biased. But what about all the in-class assignments and tests that require written answers? Shouldn't someone consider the possibility that there is grading bias against boys—and that by not teaching handwriting, boys are disadvantaged? At every stage of education boys get lower grades than girls. Their handwriting deficits are almost certainly a factor.

Some researchers, such as University of Maryland scholar Steve Graham, believe that children who are denied explicit and sustained handwriting instruction can be harmed in a very direct way. In the early grades, when children begin to put down their thoughts in writing, a child who has trouble with the mechanics of writing will be distracted. Instead of focusing on ideas and quickly putting down the two or three thoughts he holds in his mind, he is held up, and diverted by worries about how to form the letters. Most children, says Graham, "plan on line," which is to say, they figure out what they want to say while writing it.

Children who are unskilled in forming letters cannot easily form plans: Their attention is elsewhere. This means

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that for children with handwriting problems, or inadequate training in writing, the earliest experiences with writing will be frustrating. We know that early frustration with handwriting is associated with an abiding dislike for all writing. Computers are not the answer because children are not developmentally prepared for keyboards until third grade.

To write legibly, fluently, quickly, a child needs to learn to grip the pencil correctly, to stay on the line, to space words properly, and to form the letters. Bad habits can be corrected in the early years; after fourth grade, it becomes almost impossible to correct them.

By the time they reach high school, boys are about a year and a half behind girls in reading proficiency. The gap in writing is much worse. A recent Department of Education study found that in writing, "Male eleventh graders score at about the same level as female eighth graders." Some of the disparity can be ascribed to differences in handwriting skills. Isn't it time for educators to be concerned about the link between problems with the mechanics of handwriting and overall lifetime literacy?

WHAT ARE the schools doing about the problem? On the whole, penmanship education is inconsistent and unpredictable. Some schools do it, some do not. There are at least fifty different methods and there is little continuity from teacher to teacher. Handwriting research has not been fashionable in schools of education, and it is very hard to get good information on actual classroom practices. For the moment, we have to rely on estimates and studies by penmanship entrepreneurs.

One 1993 study by Zaner-Bloser, a company that manufactures handwriting materials, found that a majority of teachers (70 percent) believe that children's handwriting skills are inadequate. Most (67 percent) believe that there should be more classroom emphasis on handwriting. Unfortunately, few teachers (36 percent) ever received formal training on how to teach handwriting. Teachers are doing their best and it would be wrong to hold them responsible for the sorry state of American penmanship. As usual, the schools of education have not played a creditable role.

For one history assignment, David had to make a relief map of Israel out of pizza dough.

For the past several decades, schools have been burdened by poorly conceived initiatives from schools of education. Throughout my son's education (he is now in tenth grade), the emphasis has been on creative art projects in English and social studies classes.

For one history assignment, David had to make a relief map of Israel out of pizza dough. His grandmother and I spent an entire Sunday afternoon baking it and indicating rivers with blue thread and forests with parsley. Yes, I suppose I should have let him do it himself. But the idea of David alone in the kitchen, frustrated, angry, and covered with flour was more than I could take. And what was the point? I can't count the number of collages David has thrown together over the years. A recent assignment is typical: "Mom, I need pictures from magazines illustrating 'The American Dream' for my *Great Gatsby* final project."

But these things are not what he or any other child needs. What they need is more work on grammar, semantics, essay construction, and vocabulary development. All children, but boys especially, need better legibility and neatness in writing. As education professor Kay Huitt warned in the early seventies, "The current tendency toward incidental instruction in handwriting can soon move toward accidental instruction, and handwriting skills are too important to be left to chance."

We have gone from one extreme to the other and now must find our way to a sensible middle. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, penmanship was thought to be crucial to a young person's moral and aesthetic development. In her valuable study, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History*, historian Tamara Plakins Thornton cites penmaster Uriah McKee, saying in 1880 that wayward boys who become interested in "artistic penmanship" undergo a significant change of focus: "Vulgar stories, bar-room scandals, and billiard halls begin to lose their attraction." At a 1910 meeting of a penmanship teachers association, one presenter claimed that the Palmer method "was the initial step in the reform of many a delinquent."

There is no solid evidence that handwriting instruction will save boys from the corrupting effects of billiard halls. We do know, however, that penmanship is a basic and essential skill, that it plays a critical role in a child's basic literacy and overall success in school, and that when schools choose not to teach it, it is boys who pay the highest price. ◆

Christina Hoff Sommers is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Her book, The War Against Boys *(Simon & Schuster), has just appeared in paperback.*

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Sex, Lies, and Audiotapes

Rael Jean Isaac explains why we've been so willing to believe fantastic tales of sexual abuse.

THERE IS A widespread belief that sexual abuse of children is endemic to society. This is a relatively new notion. In fact, it can be traced to a particular moment in history: April 17, 1971.

On that day the New York Radical Feminists, a group that at its height boasted no more than 400 members, held a groundbreaking conference on rape in New York. For two days, women held forth on a subject long considered taboo. Susan Brownmiller, who would go on to write *Against Our Will*, a classic in the literature of rape, later described a speech given by Florence Rush as the highlight of the event.

"I have been to many feminist meetings," Brownmiller recalled, "but never before, and not since, have I seen an entire audience rise to its feet in acclaim. We clapped. We cheered."

Rush was an unlikely star for such a gathering. A middle-aged social worker, who had never been raped, she outlined statistical studies suggesting that sexual abuse of children, including incest, was a more widespread problem than was generally recognized. It was Rush's conclusion that electrified her audience: "The family itself is an instrument of sexual and other forms of child abuse," Rush declared. She added that this abuse "is permitted because it is an unspoken but prominent factor in socializing and preparing the female to accept a subordinate role.... In short the sexual abuse of female children is a process of education that prepares them to become the wives and mothers of America."

Many women at the gathering had backgrounds in the New Left of the 1960s. They felt their male comrades had exploited them, relegating them to making coffee, typing, and sex.

Now they could show that feminists had uncovered the great American se-

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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cret: Behind the picket fences, hidden by those starched suburban curtains, fathers were raping daughters to prepare them for their proper role in society. Beyond racism, imperialism, and capitalism lay the true root of evil—patriarchy.

Before Rush's speech, feminists had given little thought to incest. Author Andrea Dworkin recalled that before the conference "we never had any idea how common it was." In the decades following Rush's talk, feminists more than made up for their earlier unawareness, competing with each other in elevating the number of victims.

Catharine MacKinnon, the law professor who helped develop the legal definitions of sexual harassment, announced (absent any evidence) that 4.5 percent of all women are victims of incest by their fathers and, if brothers, stepfathers, uncles, and family friends are thrown in, the figure rose to 40 percent. "In fact," wrote MacKinnon, "it is the woman who has not been sexually abused who deviates." Seemingly scholarly studies by feminists-with-credentials such as Harvard psychiatrist Judith Herman bolstered the case for widespread incest. Herman dedicated her 1981 book, *Father-Daughter Incest*, to the women "estimated by us to be in the millions, who have personally experienced incestuous abuse." No wonder Andrea Dworkin wrote that, for a woman, the home is the most dangerous place in the world!

As the feminists saw it, bringing incestuous rape out of the closet would finally vindicate the truth of women's experience. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychotherapy, had believed early in his career that sexual abuse was the cause of his female patients' neurotic symptoms. Later, however, Freud dismissed such testimony from his female patients as fantasy. According to Herman, Freud simply could not confront the reality that incest "is an inevitable result of patriarchal family structure."

Believe the women. Believe the children. These refrains became the mantra of the incest movement. While the women's movement would be enormously successful in turning sexual abuse—including incest—into a major public issue, women, ironically, would become the chief victims of the hysteria it generated.

The obsession with this supposedly rampant sexual abuse played out in two ways: "Believe the women" became the repressed memory hysteria. "Believe the children" turned into the daycare hysteria.

At the time of the conference, psychiatric textbooks estimated the rate of father-daughter incest at one to two for every million women in the United States. If that figure was accurate, it was not surprising that incest attracted little public attention. On the other hand, if, in fact, fathers were sexually abusing millions of daughters, why did no one know of it?

The theory of "repressed memory" provided the answer. A woman was so traumatized by being molested by her father, the theory said, that she banished the memory from her conscious mind. Paul McHugh, head of the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical School, is skeptical of repressed memory. McHugh sees the development of the concept as one of the "misadventures" of the last thirty years that show "the power of cultural fashion to lead psychiatric thought and practice off in false, even disastrous, directions."

However poorly grounded in science, the theory helped explain why so few women remembered their incestuous experiences until they entered therapy. According to the theory, the intact, repressed memory festered in a special part of the brain producing, as psychiatrist Lenore Terr put it, "signs and symptoms" that disrupted the woman's life. While Terr and Herman were important in lending a cloak of medical legitimacy to the idea of repressed memory, the most influential work was *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, neither of whom had training in psychiatry. Published in 1988, *The Courage to Heal* has sold more than 700,000 copies.

The book asked such questions as: Do you have difficulty expressing your feelings? Problems trusting your intuition? Have an eating disorder? Feel different from other people? Feel powerless, like a victim? If you answered "yes" to these or exhibited any of a host of other "symptoms," *The Courage to Heal* said that it was time to consider the possibility that you had been sexually abused as a child.

Convinced sexual abuse was endemic and seeing such symptoms as "evidence," therapists of all types, from psychiatrists on down, set out to "help" patients unlock their buried memories. They used a variety of methods, including hypnosis, injections of sodium amytal ("truth serum"), guided imagery, dream work, participation in "survivor groups," even massage therapy to recover "body memories" of abuse. Yet as social psychology professor Richard Ofshe points out in *Making Monsters*, the scientific grounding for all this was absent.

Indeed, studies on memory show that intense emotional experiences are the least likely to be forgotten. Ironically, Dr. Terr's reputation was based on her study of twenty-six children who had been kidnapped from a school bus in Chowchilla, California, and entombed in a truck trailer. She found

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that years after the traumatic experience each child retained detailed memories of the event. Nor is there any evidence that traumatic memories are stored in pristine form in a special part of the brain. On the contrary, as forensic psychologist Dr. Terence Campbell points out, brain-imaging studies show memory and imagination involve the same areas of the cerebral cortex—it is hard to separate the two.

As for hypnosis (and sodium amytal), the American Medical Association's Council on Scientific Affairs states: "Contrary to what is generally believed by the public, recollections obtained during hypnosis not only fail to be more accurate but actually appear to be generally less reliable than non-hypnotic recall." The American Psychiatric Association guidelines note that "no specific unique symptom profile has been identified that necessarily correlated with abuse experiences."

While feminists always assumed the abuser was male, Florence Rush found in her work with (genuinely) abused children that these young victims frequently focused their rage on their mothers. Rush argued that it is men, not women, who actually rape our young and it is time for them, not women, to be held responsible. Or, as feminist writer Robin Morgan succinctly put it, "Kill your father, not your mother." Still, a 1993 survey of over a thousand cases by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, the Philadelphia-based organization that has been in the forefront of exposing problems with recovered memory therapy, found that in fully a third of cases, the mother was accused of active sexual abuse.

Even those daughters who identified their fathers as the abuser blamed their mothers for failing to protect them. Some remembered the mothers' holding them down while their fathers raped them. That is what Beth Rutherford claimed happened. Rutherford, after two years in therapy, "remembered" her minister-father twice impregnating her and then performing a coat-hanger abortion (never mind that a medical examination showed she was a virgin). Rutherford convinced her sisters that they were also in danger of being murdered by their father. One sister actually went into hiding, and all three cut off any communication with both parents. Beth Rutherford has since recanted the accusations and written about her family's ordeal.

After two years in therapy, Beth Rutherford "remembered" her minister-father twice impregnating her (never mind that a medical examination showed she was a virgin).

While it may be hard to summon up much sympathy for the daughter who rips apart her family because of therapist-induced delusions, in many cases she is clearly the biggest victim of all. As therapy proceeds, she produces ever more lurid memories. Indeed, in an estimated 15 percent of cases, the repressed memory patient develops memories of satanic ritual abuse. Increasingly satanic cult "survivors" are realizing they were victims of their therapists and are suing them for malpractice. The evidence of therapist misconduct is so impressive, and jury verdicts have been so high that many insurance companies now settle during the trial.

Dr. Bennett Braun's insurance company settled for $10.6 million the day his trial was to begin. Dr. Braun's patient, Patricia Burgus, had, through therapy, become convinced that she had been the high priestess of a satanic cult. Hospitalized for over two years, Burgus "remembered" lit torches pushed inside her and having to eat body parts of 2,000 people in one year.

While under the care of Dr. Kenneth Olson, Nadean Cool became convinced that she had 120 personalities (including that of a duck), had knifed babies in the heart and passed them around to other cult members to eat. The psychiatrist even performed an exorcism on Cool while she was tethered to a hospital bed. In the Cool case, the insurance company settled for $2.4 million after fifteen days of testimony.

If "believe the women" produced the nightmare of repressed memory therapy, "believe the children" led to something arguably more horrific, the daycare trials. Many convicted of sexual abuse of children in their care during the 1980s and early 90s, when the hysteria was at its height, have since appealed their cases and are now free. Gerald Amirault, who has been in prison since 1986, has not been so fortunate. Amirault, whose family operated the Fells Acres Day School in Malden, Massachusetts, was convicted of abusing children with a magic wand while wearing a clown costume.

Amirault's then sixty-year-old mother, Violet, was convicted of raping children and assaulting them with a butcher knife (there were no scars). Gerald's younger sister, Cheryl, was supposed, among other things, to have

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slaughtered bluebirds and cut off the leg of a squirrel in front of the children. Violet Amirault was released from prison before her death in 1997. In Cheryl's case, a judge revised and revoked her sentence. A condition of Cheryl Amirault's release was that she promise to undertake no further legal efforts to prove her innocence.

The Amirault case did not involve "recovered" memories but rather the testimony of small children. Florence Rush once made the valid point that, traditionally, investigators had been too quick to dismiss children's accounts of abuse. Rush argued that children differentiate between make-believe and reality "often more accurately than adults."

Indeed, a number of judges and juries have found defendants guilty on the assumption that children could *not* make such things up. What they have failed to recognize is the role of therapists in evoking stories of hideous abuse from little children, who recount their stories with such conviction on the witness stand. In *Jeopardy in the Courtroom: A Scientific Analysis of Children's Testimony*, psychology professors Stephen J. Ceci and Maggie Bruck examined hundreds of transcripts of therapist interviews of small children in the daycare cases.

They described the mechanisms by which children who initially denied that anything bad had happened were led eventually to recount lurid tales of abuse. These children had been subjected to, among other things, repeated questioning by multiple interviewers who refused to take "nothing happened" for an answer and selective reinforcement—children were rewarded with police badges in exchange for incriminating statements and berated when denying that abuse occurred.

There was also peer pressure (the children were told what other children had supposedly revealed and were told they could help their friends by saying the same things). The children also had to answer leading questions. The use of special anatomical dolls with enlarged genitalia also provided ample opportunities for misinterpretation. Ceci and Bruck point out that a child may insert a finger into a doll's genitalia simply because of its novelty, just as a preschooler, given a doughnut, is likely to put a finger into the hole.

One of the worst stories is that of Kelly Michaels. Ceci and Bruck devote special attention to the questioning of children in the Michaels case. Freshly graduated from a small Catholic college near Pittsburgh, Michaels was arrested in 1986, charged with sexually abusing dozens of children at the Wee Care daycare center in New Jersey. After a lengthy jury trial, Michaels was sentenced to forty-seven years in prison. Ceci and Bruck filed an *amicus* brief in her appeal. Signed by forty-six child psychologists, the brief argued that testimony had been elicited from children in "a shocking manner" by frightening and bullying them and through sexually explicit interviewing.

IT IS WORTH NOTING that in the Michaels case, as in the other daycare cases, the improbability of the entire scenario disturbed not judge, jury, or media. Michaels was accused of raping almost all the children in the daycare center with knives, forks, spoons, Lego blocks (one child testified she had forced the socket end of a light bulb into her vagina)—all during regular school hours for a period of seven months. Audiotapes of the children's original testimony showed that some children testified their parents were present during these goings-on. One child asserted that the head teacher had walked in as Kelly was penetrating the children with assorted utensils, took the silverware, and put it in her briefcase. The prosecution disposed of such inconvenient testimony by explaining that these were "rescue fantasies."

No member of the staff (including the head teacher) at Wee Care had noticed anything amiss in all those months and no child had complained to his parents. So, while, in his summing up, Judge William Harth adjured the jury to "use your common sense," neither he nor the jury showed much of that vital commodity. Michaels had been imprisoned for five years before the appeals court threw out her conviction on the grounds that the children's testimony had been tainted by improper interviewing techniques.

As for the women with "repressed memories" who cut themselves off from their parents, even going so far as to sue them in civil or criminal court, many have recanted their accusations or reestablished ties without saying they were wrong. Many families remain permanently estranged. Many of the women convicted in the daycare or sex ring cases have by now been released (the men are another story). But the lives of all those involved were shattered, and it is hard to put Humpty Dumpty together again.

The feminists who rallied around Florence Rush believed that they could end child abuse by abolishing the patriarchal family, which was its "cause." Instead they launched a child abuse hysteria in which pseudo-science has flourished. Both men and women have been its victims. ◆

Rael Jean Isaac is most recently co-author of Madness in the Streets: How Psychiatry and the Law Abandoned the Mentally Ill *(Free Press).*

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When the Law Runs Amok

Author *Jonathan Rauch* talks with *TWQ* editor Charlotte Hays about the value of Hidden Law.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN when a kindergarten boy is accused of sexual harassment for trying to kiss a little girl? Or an Olympic gymnast is forced to return her gold medal for taking two Sudafed tablets? And what about the kid sent home for bringing a "weapon" to school—even though it was a squirt gun?

Jonathan Rauch—a National Journal *columnist and one of Washington's most provocative thinkers—talked about the perils of living in an overly legalistic society in a recent Bradley Lecture at the American Enterprise Institute titled "Courting Danger: the Rise of Antisocial Law."*

A former correspondent for the Economist, *Rauch is a writer in residence at the Brookings Institution in Washington, where he spoke with* TWQ *editor Charlotte Hays.*

TWQ: *You use an intriguing term, Bureaucratic Legalism, to describe the legalistic bent of our society. What do you mean by this?*

RAUCH: I use the term Bureaucratic Legalism as a way to emphasize the very bureaucratic nature of law in many areas in American life. It's the notion that if you go through enough legal process, then the outcome must be right.

I can't stress too strongly that, for all the criticisms I am about to make of Bureaucratic Legalism, the establishment of the rule of law is one of the greatest achievements of human civilization. The question is, what happens if it starts getting off its leash? What if it's used with an eight-year-old girl who brings a nail clipper to school?

TWQ: *You talk about another kind of law—Hidden Law. What is that?*

RAUCH: It's the rich, dense web of etiquette, norms, social codes, and customs that evolve in communities over periods of hundreds of years to avert or resolve conflicts. I call it hidden because it's so imbedded in our social structures that we forget it exists. It's like remembering to drive on the right side of the road. And I call it law because, although of course it really isn't law in a formal sense, it is at least as important in many situations as formal law is in regulating conduct and making sure people get along. Hidden Law is everything from table manners to the informal mechanisms by which neighbors settle land disputes.

TWQ: *Is there a role for hypocrisy in Hidden Law?*

RAUCH: Yes, there's an essential role for hypocrisy. I'm particularly interested in a class of Hidden Law that I call "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Now, I should say that as a gay person, I'm very much against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in the military. I'm talking about something broader: conventions that allow us to avoid conflict by making tacit agreements with each other to pretend not to see what the other person is doing. We just pretend nothing is going on, even though we both

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know something is going on, and I know that you know, and I know that you know that I know.

TWQ: *Let's see how Hidden Law works in specific applications. How does it work in the case of adultery?*

RAUCH: Adultery is my favorite example of the Hidden Law of looking the other way, or as some people call it, wink-wink, nudge-nudge. Adultery has a three-layered code. The formal code—the one we tell our children—is don't play around, period. That would be the line that, say, Bill Bennett takes. Below that, however, there is the real rule: We know that some people are going to mess around and that this is inevitable. So, if you're going to do it, keep it quiet. Keep it out of sight so that the children don't find out and so that everyone can pretend that they don't know.

And then, below this rule, there's another rule that's still more hypocritical and the most elegant of all. And that rule is: If somebody does find out, they pretend not to see it. The hidden rule with adultery is that, if you'll pretend not to do it, we'll pretend not to see it. This makes adultery very inconvenient, while at the same time allowing enough room that people aren't prying into the lives of other people to arrest them for having illicit affairs. Wonderfully effective.

TWQ: *Pornography?*

RAUCH: Pornography is a slightly more complicated case because formal law has always been involved in regulating pornography, and, in fact, used to be more involved than it is today. But Hidden Law has always played a role in regulating pornography. You can't stamp out pornography. You probably don't want to. What you can do is keep it out of sight and pretend not to see it. If pornography is downtown on skid row, respectable people can pretend that they don't even know it's there. If they do happen to go downtown and purchase a dirty magazine or video, they do it out of sight of their friends and neighbors. Now, this is an important convention, because it allows us all to pretend that pornography is not a part of our lives, and it also restrains the amount of pornography that circulates above ground, in plain view.

TWQ: *Let's talk about how Hidden Law works in assisted suicide.*

The hidden rule with adultery is that, if you'll pretend not to do it, we'll pretend not to see it.

RAUCH: Along with adultery, assisted suicide is an interesting example of the profound delicacy and elegance of Hidden Law. Assisted suicide is a terribly fraught, difficult situation. Anyone who's ever faced this kind of situation will tell you how agonizing it is to have to choose between having someone suffer pain until the inevitable end or helping him hasten that end.

The way Hidden Law dealt with this was by a kind of tacit agreement between the doctor, the patient, and the relatives, in which the person might be helped to die. Everyone involved would know what was happening, but there would be no public discussions about it. There would be no formal legal procedure. There would be just whispers in the hallway and signs that this is what the patient wanted. And the discretion of adults applying this sort of thing seems to me on the whole extraordinarily good. I'm sure that there were some abuses. But this seems to have been a far more humane way of dealing with these situations—of which no two are ever alike—than having prosecutors and review panels and politicians and laws written in advance for every situation.

TWQ: *Sexual harassment?*

RAUCH: That's a harder case, because the very concept of sexual harassment grew out of law. If you had said your boss was sexually harassing you in the 1950s or 1960s, no one would have known what you were talking about. And, by today's standards, Hidden Law didn't do a terribly good job of dealing with a situation where a woman, say, in the workplace, found that her boss kept asking her for dates or putting his hand in an inappropriate place. On the other hand, there were mechanisms that dealt with this, to some extent, under Hidden Law.

If a man's groping or mashing, as it was called then, got out of hand and became a public issue—or even a private issue on the office grapevine—the man began to get what was called a "reputation." If you began to see women coming out of his office with their hair mussed and their clothes askew, then you'd see an informal mechanism by which it would be suggested to this fellow that maybe he didn't fit in so well at this particular place. Or he'd be passed over for promotions. I don't think that solved the problem, but remember, back then most people didn't understand that there was a problem. In today's world Hidden Law would be much stricter, even if the courts hadn't gotten involved. And it's not clear that outlawing office romances, or making men afraid to meet privately with female colleagues, is a good idea.

TWQ: *Abortion?*

RAUCH: Abortion, too, is tricky, be-

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cause formal law has always been involved, and formal law should be involved in abortion. But it's interesting to point out that until recently abortion—apart from being either murder, if you're pro-life, or a civil right, if you're pro-choice—was something else: a secret. There was an understanding that people got abortions, but there was also an understanding that you didn't really talk about it. Now what was that all about? Was that just some sort of crazy hypocrisy? The answer is no if you believe—as I and a lot of other people do—that abortion should be safe, legal, and rare. Then a good way to deal with abortion is the long-standing social convention, that if you're going to have an abortion, it's going to be stigmatized to some extent. Or, at least, it won't be something you talk about. And it won't be as easy to get as, say, a pair of eyeglasses. But, on the other hand, if you want it, it's there.

What all of these situations have in common—how you deal with something like an abortion or pornography or adultery—is that they all deal with extremely intimate, interpersonal moral conflicts. All of these go to our cores as moral beings. We're never all going to approve of any one way of handling these situations. But Hidden Law allowed us to get along with each other and, in effect, work around the conflict, by saying, "If you'll pretend not to do it, I'll pretend not to see it."

TWQ: *Let's talk about some instances in which Bureaucratic Legalism rather than Hidden Law has been applied. Was the case of the Olympic athlete who had to give back her gold medal because she'd taken cold medication an example of Bureaucratic Legalism at work?*

RAUCH: There's a rationale for prohibiting drugs and being strict about it. But, if you think about the way Hidden Law copes with this sort of situation, it would say, "Is this offense worthy of notice? Maybe not. All right, we're all going to pretend that it didn't happen." Well, Bureaucratic Legalism can't do that. By its very nature, its standard of fairness is equal application, to absolutely everybody, all the time. It views Hidden Law as capricious and arbitrary and inequitable in that it makes distinctions between people based on very personal, local judgments. So, with Bureaucratic Legalism, it becomes virtually impossible to make exceptions. You wind up with situations like kids being suspended and expelled for bringing a nail clipper or a plastic squirt gun to school, because the weapons policy didn't insert the word "plastic" when it banned guns.

You replace "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" with ask, ask, ask, tell, tell, tell.

TWQ: *Could one argue that the starting point of Clinton-Lewinsky was Bureaucratic Legalism in the form of sexual harassment laws?*

RAUCH: Yes, in the form of sexual harassment law and the Independent Counsel statute, which was written on the assumption that the Justice Department and traditional prosecutors can never be trusted with discretion, because they might sometimes look the other way. And you can't have that. The other aspect is the Violence Against Women Act, which was written in a way that deliberately made it possible for a plaintiff in a sexual harassment suit to scour the sex life of the defendant. Now, that's a shocking concept. It's not a good idea to have Bureaucratic Legalism nosing around in people's sex lives—you replace "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" with ask, ask, ask, tell, tell, tell. This is a nightmare for everybody involved, and I think we saw a good example of it in Clinton-Lewinsky.

TWQ: *What do you make of the way the public responded to Clinton-Lewinsky?*

RAUCH: The broad American public was deeply committed to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" regime where if you've got a president or anyone else committing adultery, then we don't want to know about it as long as his wife—in this case, Hillary—pretends not to know what's going on. Then the duty of the rest of us is to close our eyes and shut up. The Violence Against Women Act, of course, and the Independent Counsel law shot that to pieces by saying, "Well, you're going to find out what's going on whether you want to or not." But right through to the end, the public was more outraged at the conduct of the law then it was at the conduct of President Clinton. And their instincts were perfectly sound. Clinton's behavior was execrable, but the law's behavior was barbaric.

Then you had the liberals, most of whom simply rallied to Clinton. And then you had conservatives. I would have thought that if any group would say, "What Clinton's doing here is bad, but what the law is doing here is also extremely bad and possibly worse," it would have been the conservatives. But they didn't do that at all. They were so outraged by Clinton that they became the most rigorous legal formalists imaginable. I think the resulting fiasco is a good example of the sort of thing that happens when you get zero-tolerance legalism trying to sort out intimate, personal moral conflicts. ◆

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The Token Man

Stand by Your Man… And Then Shoot Him

The Dixie Chicks get real even with a coot named Earl in a controversial song and video. ***Dave Shiflett*** digs the Chicks and is hummin' a similar tune.

AMONG THE MANY heartbreaks that come with membership in the chattering class is the knowledge that the yodeling class holds much greater sway in this world. The most highly regarded journalistic thumb-suckers—who extract the very marrow from their suffering digits—address relatively small audiences when compared to pop culture idols. Still, many of the chatter-heads are under the impression that, without them, no wisdom will be dispensed.

The facts are otherwise. Consider, to give one prominent example, an excellent public policy position staked out by the three Wise Women from the South: The Dixie Chicks. For those who are unaware of this power trio, the Chicks, as their devotees know and revere them, command huge audiences, a large portion of which are women. They admittedly sometimes go overboard on the Chick Power stuff, but marketing's marketing.

More to the point, they have taken a brave stand on an issue of no small importance to many females: What to do with a raving, mean, menacing, cruel, reeking, drunk, throat-grabber of a husband. Their answer: Kill him.

As we say in the chattering kingdom: Just So.

This doctrine of Just Dispatch is at the heart of a Chick song (and accompanying video) entitled "Goodbye Earl." To sum up the plot: Earl is an all too familiar type—the abusive male who uses his physical power to intimidate and rule his "love" interest. The Chicks, perhaps from experience or perhaps merely from imagination, paint a picture of a decided lout.

In a civilized society such people would, of course, be chased down by packs of dogs and roasted on a spit. Yet our society has not yet evolved to that point. And so the Chicks had to find

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another way to dispose of Earl. They chose to poison his black-eyed peas. Earl dies. If tears are shed, they are tears of joy. Domestic tranquility has been restored. This is the ultimate in household management.

To be sure, murdering pests such as Earl remains a controversial policy with some, including short-sighted judges and those who strictly interpret this or that Commandment. These people have obviously never had an Earl breathing down their necks—or, more to the point, compressing their necks. Weeding such people out of the population has become a somewhat familiar theme.

County music has had several hits along these lines in recent years. Sometimes the lout is shot. Sometimes he is burned alive. As it happens, I am currently penning a tune in which a bad guy is buried up to his neck in the yard and run over with a riding mower. Entitled "A Little More off the Top," it promises to be a hit, especially because the sound effects will be awesome.

It is not likely that the song will be snapped up right away, however. Our society being what it is, telling the truth too plainly can cause problems. The Chicks paid a price for their candor. Some radio stations refused to play "Goodbye Earl." Others played it, then piled on a bunch of statistics about domestic abuse. If "A Little More off the Top" ever gets airplay, there will, no doubt, be public service announcements about lawnmower safety tagged on at the end, yet that is a price one must be willing to pay.

Meanwhile, it's worth remembering that people die in songs with some regularity. Often, the victims have been women—who, just as often, are guilty of nothing more than being attached to jealous men. "The Banks of the Ohio" is one example; in that instance, a fellow with "control issues" decides to drown his lover rather than risk losing her (the Chicks' Earl, as it happens, is dumped in a lake after the poison does its work). "Hey Joe," the Jimi Hendrix hit, tells of an unfaithful woman being shot, and the immortal "Pretty Polly" also features a woman who does not make it to the end of the song alive.

People die in songs with some regularity.

It is also true that there are enlightened public officials who have come around to the Chicks' point of view. Just recently, the Nebraska Court of Appeals ordered Charlene Oldenburg released from jail, where she had been sent after shooting her husband, who made the mistake of coming home drunk one morning with mayhem on his mind. His story could serve as the basis for a future hit.

This lout, name of Kurt, barged in and attacked Charlene in her bed. After her protests, he left the house, only to return. Because this was hardly the first such incident, Charlene had armed herself, and those arms were definitely not for hugging, as Kurt discovered when he ignored her advice to clear out. He apparently made a lunge for the gun, which discharged a bullet into his neck and ended his career as a rampaging creep. Suggested title: "Kurt Don't Get 'Round Like He Used To."

There is plenty of other material out there to work with. I recall a story much in the news while I lived in Colorado in the 1990s. A woman had fled an abusive thug and taken an apartment, where she hoped to live a quiet and dignified life. While in the bathroom one morning, she heard a faint stirring from beneath the sink. When she opened the cabinet door, a great shock awaited: Looking back at her was the thug's head.

Unfortunately, the head was attached to his body, which as a unit had rented the apartment under hers and had bored a hole in the ceiling for stalking purposes. Needless to say, this man was a total and incurable sicko who represented a massive threat to this woman. She was hardly in a class by herself. The world is full of thugs who will not be dissuaded by restraining orders. My wife, a therapist, counseled many women who were being stalked. My advice to her is always the same: Tell them to buy a gun.

It is no coincidence that many of the activists in the national campaign to secure the right to carry concealed weapons have been women. One afternoon I went shooting with one such activist, who cut an impressive and alluring figure with her .45 automatic and the sense of security it conferred. Like some other colleagues, she took up the gun after having been raped, vowing there would no repeat performances. She had a particularly memorable formula for turning back aggressors: "Two to the chest, one to the head"—which, come to think of it, might itself make for a catchy tune.

Unfortunately, this cause has yet to catch fire as a women's issue, perhaps because too many women in leadership roles would rather melt a gun than pack one. Their idea of a protective device is a whistle or a cell phone. I have a song title for the futility of the latter: "Whatcha Gonna Do—Talk Me to Death?" ◆

Dave Shiflett is a writer living in Midlothian, Virginia.

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Deadly, She Wrote

Albert Pyle solves the mystery of the disappearing reader.

FROM MY SEAT behind the circulation desk at one of the country's older and more agreeable libraries I, like my predecessors in the long history of this asylum for the literate, watch the steady, reverent stream of readers come in on the endless hunt for a good read. It's hard. Hard for the increasingly disappointed readers. Hard for me. I buy the books. And the pickings are so slim. So very slim.

The readers at this wonderful old library are generous, well-educated midwesterners. And they have my sympathy. Diffident, undemanding, hard-working people who so love reading that they are willing to pay a subscription to belong to an anomalous nineteenth-century institution that exists cheek-by-jowl with one of the best municipal libraries in the nation. These are the people authors dream of when they write.

What they're looking for is what readers have been seeking in this historic Cincinnati library for 166 years. Escape. These are people who reach for a book rather than a remote. And they like fiction. No, they love fiction. Half the collection here is fiction. And about a third of that is detective fiction. Mysteries. Genre fiction, books shunned by the PEN crowd and the National Book Award set, indeed, but the kind of fiction that people seek out. Desperately, in some cases. (Full disclosure: I've written detective fiction.) (Shameful disclosure: I haven't written a mystery for years.)

But I can't find enough good detective fiction for them to read. It's not there to buy. Not the good stuff. Our faithful readers make hopeful beelines to the mystery shelf and begin the long, disappointing crawl through the new selections, smiles fading as they pull book after book to check out the end flaps. What do they find? Alas, where once they found reliable detectives, now, time and again, they find irritating didactives.

And I don't mean just those piously PC PIs with beautiful English professor girlfriends. (Although God knows they're plenty annoying.) For some reason, American publishers, the same people who think readers want more and more memoirs by twenty-two-year-old heroin fanciers, have gotten it into their foolish heads that the browsers who need a break from the post-pubescent memoirs are probably

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looking for mysteries that feature hard-driving women whose primary qualification is feminist purity and/or their membership in the Modern Language Association.

And, before her zillions of fans start infarcting, I most assuredly do not include Kinsey Millhone among the sinners. Wrongheaded though she may be in her politics (aerobically knee-jerking), Sue Grafton's wry, hard-working California PI earned her stripes the old-fashioned way, by professionally puzzling through the clues and locking up the bad guys.

And I, of course, exclude Dame Agatha's supremely clever Jane Marple. I've got no beef with Edna Buchanan's randy reportrix Britt Montero, either. I'm even willing to put up with the shamelessly leftist sentiments of Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski since Paretsky's Chicago is so accurate. And she's a good writer.

No. What I'm talking about is the likes of, say, writer Abigail Padgett's social psychologist and crime solver Blue McCarron. Ms. Padgett introduced Ms. McCarron to the reading public in *Blue*. Daughter of an Episcopal priest, twin sister of a bank robber, Blue McCarron, a Ph.D. who left academia to advise shopping mall owners on female buying habits, lives in an uncompleted motel in California with her man-hating Doberman, Bronte. Blue (the name becomes more annoying with every reading) carries a torch for Misha, one-time program director for something called the Inter-Collegiate Women's Studies Consortium.

McCarron's introductory case involves a corpse that's defrosting after years in the freezer where he was stored by his blameless killer. In her new outing, *The Last Blue Plate Special*, Dr. McCarron is consultant to a politician in San Diego, where two local liberal lady activists have died mysteriously and two others have been mysteriously attacked.

Who is Blue McCarron's partner and lover in the hunt for the murderer of blamelessly left-wing lovelies? It's Roxanne Bouchie, one of an astonishingly large number of lesbian forensic pathologists striding through modern detective fiction. Worthy as they may be, however, neither social psychologists nor lesbian forensic pathologists seem to have a place in the mental escape strategies of readers here at the library. We bought the first Blue McCarron adventure on its publication in 1998. It's been checked out one time. We passed on the new Blue.

Nor is there a place for someone like Regina, Saskatchewan university department head (political science, I'm afraid) or crime solver Joanne Kilborn, protagonist in Gail Bowen's *Burying Ariel*. Professor Kilborn has to sort out a murder in the stacks (happens here all the time) and keep at bay organized and outraged Saskatchewanian feminists, who smell male malice. Actually, there may not be a place for any Canadian on the bookshelf. Although plenty of the readers here are perfectly delighted to visit the moose-rich Tory refuge on holiday, experience has taught them to be deeply wary of that strong odor of moral superiority so distinctive of Canadian literature. Perhaps our northern neighbors find escape in worthiness. We don't.

The peak of worthiness may actually have been reached within our own national borders in *Overnight Float* by former college presidents Jill Ker Conway and Elizabeth Kennan who, writing together as Clare Munnings, put crime solution in the hands of Rosemary Stubbs, a widowed, ex-computer corporate CFO turned divinity student and chaplain to all-girl Sanderson College where the school treasurer has been found dead in the new swimming pool.

What is it about academia, anyway? In the nineteenth century, publishers cranked out endless streams of literary and semi-scientific ramblings by Oxonian and Cantabrigian dons with too much time on their hands. My predecessors bought those books by the ton. Unwanted then, unpopular now, they take up hundreds of shelf feet in the stacks. Apparently the twenty-first century counterparts of those dreamy dons have every bit as much time on their hands if the number of collegiate corpses is any indication.

In *Brown-Eyed Girl*, author Virginia Swift, a professor at the University of New Mexico, placed her crime solution in the hands of Sally Alder, a history professor who forsakes UCLA for an endowed chair in American Women's History at the University of Wyoming. Charming as the story may be, our readers seem to have been repelled by the educational overtones. The book has had but one outing in its year on the mystery shelf.

Equally ignored was Kate Flora's *Death in Paradise*. Despite the novel's potentially glamorous escapist Hawaiian setting, the end flap's reference to the educational seminar that is the excuse for the location set off alarms among our wary readers. Warning: May Contain Instruction.

I cannot help asking myself in the quiet afternoon hours as I watch the dust settle from the vast overhead of the reading room to the tops of the immobile mysteries, "Who reads this stuff?" Who exactly is it who's had it with the cynical, sexist, apolitical, old-fashioned private eyes who seemed much more willing to open their minds to possibilities than these new,

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Politically Correct Private Eyes

IT'S A SHAME that some PC PIs taint the otherwise enjoyable mysteries in which they appear.

Dr. Kay Scarpetta, the heroine of Patricia Cornwell's best-selling mysteries, isn't a private eye. Scarpetta is the chief medical examiner of the state of Virginia.

Scarpetta's use of forensic science to solve murders—sometimes with the help of lesbian niece Lucy, a whiz with computers—is dazzling.

While Cornwell is a true mistress of the art of the plot twist, sometimes the corpse isn't the only dud in the book. There are also feminist sermons from Scarpetta. "Law enforcement tolerates women," she whines in the most recent addition to the Scarpetta canon, *The Last Precinct*. "It doesn't celebrate them and punishes those who become heroes."

This from a highly respected medical examiner who tools around Virginia in a Mercedes!

Amateur sleuth **Kate Fansler** is, like her creator, Carolyn Heilbrun, who writes mysteries under the pseudonym Amanda Cross (a man to cross?), a professor at a big New York university—and an outspoken feminist.

Kate's specialty is solving murders in academic settings, and the well-bred, martini-loving heiress is beguiling. Still, the reader sometimes feels like the culprits who in *The Puzzled Heart* kidnap Kate's husband, District Attorney Reed Amhearst, and threaten to kill him if Kate continues her "insane feminist" ramblings.

Stay away from *Death in a Tenured Position*, though—it's Cross at her most didactic. Janet Mandelbaum, the first woman to hold a tenured position in Harvard's English department, turns up dead. We don't think we'll spoil the suspense if we reveal that the death was a suicide—the hidebound men at Harvard were *that* mean to her! A subplot revolves around a Sapphic commune of big-hearted women, who operate a vegetarian restaurant.

Instead of academic settings, Peter Tremayne's popular sleuth, **Sister Fidelma**, works in a seventh-century monastic environment. Fidelma is not just a religious—she is also a dalaigh, or lawyer, trained in Ireland's old Brehon law, which protected women against "sexual harassment, discrimination, and rape." According to the preface, this legal system made ancient Ireland "almost a feminist paradise."

Fidelma and her dim sidekick, Brother Eadulf (is there something more than *agape* between these two?), solve complicated and delightful crimes, such as when the Archbishop of Canterbury-designate is garroted in his chambers in the Vatican.

Unfortunately, Fidelma can be a royal pain. In addition to being a smug feminist, Fidelma has a bee in her wimple that the freewheeling Celtic Church was forced to submit to the patriarchal rule of the Vatican. Still, you've got to hand it to a mystery writer who places a murder at the Synod of Whitby.

But the PC PI makes us long for Nancy Drew, Carolyn Keene's motherless girl-detective. Instead of bemoaning the patriarchy, after solving the "case of the hidden staircase," Nancy decides to throw a party. "We'll prepare a superduper lunch to celebrate this occasion," she exclaims.

– C. H. and I. S.

tenured consultants with their superbly enlightened sensibilities?

Who doesn't want to be drawn into the subtle world of Baroness James' Adam Dalgleish anymore? Who finds police procedurals to be as outdated as dodos? Is this new, helpful, politically correct sub-genre what, say, Christine Todd Whitman curls up with after an exhausting day adjusting her policies to the new Texas reality? Did Madeleine Albright send her assistants out to load up on feminist detection for those long, long flights to Tel Aviv and Beijing? Is Ruth Bader Ginsburg hitting the bookshops in the off hours in search of mysteries that will guide her to wisdom?

I don't think so.

So who's buying? Other libraries, certainly. Public libraries with much more than the $15K in my book-buying budget don't have to be so selective. They can make all kinds of purchasing mistakes and no one but future librarians looking for shelf space will take them to task. And, I guess, there is—there must be—a population sub-sector I will call, for lack of an academic term, dutiful readers. Dutiful readers (we must have no more than a couple here at the library) come in looking for something to shore up their belief in beliefs. But I can't believe they're big spenders.

More than half the readers here are women. The library sits in the heart of the business district, and the women who come here are on break from work. They are secretaries and investment advisors, attorneys, and bankers. They are smart and they don't have time to waste. And they're not looking for lessons in feminism. Let me tell you what they make a beeline for: Macho Ed McBain. ◆

Albert Pyle is executive director of The Mercantile Library, a private library in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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June Cleaver Wants Flex Time

Jennifer C. Braceras proposes a Third Way for American mothers.

I HAPPEN TO BELIEVE that the divide between the "radical feminists" and what I call the "radical traditionalists" is wide, particularly when it comes to the political and policy debates surrounding issues that affect women. I say "issues that affect women"—as opposed to "women's issues"—for a very deliberate reason. Ordinarily, when people speak of so-called women's issues, they are referring to a specific set of policy objectives that have come to dominate the feminist agenda—abortion rights, comparable worth, sexual harassment. But, of course, these are not the only issues that affect women.

There are a whole host of issues that impact women each and every day, most of which are not on the front burner of the organized feminist agenda. Tax policy, to take just one example, often affects women differently from men. On issues ranging from the marriage penalty to taxes on home businesses, our tax policy has major consequences for the choices women make and for the quality of their daily lives.

For too long the debate over issues that affect women and about the role of women in society has been dominated by the extremes. On the one hand, radical feminist groups like the National Organization for Women have marginalized stay-at-home mothers and, indeed, any woman who dares to question their goal of an unfettered right to abortion on demand. On the other hand, radical traditionalists often seek an unrealistic return to the 1950s when women stayed home and minded the children while their husbands brought home the bacon.

The focus by both sides on the abortion issue has always been somewhat of a curiosity to me. Polling data consis-

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tently demonstrate that abortion is not even close to being the most important issue in women's lives. So, if abortion is not the signature issue for most women, what is?

According to the Polling Company, education and taxes topped the list of women's concerns during the 2000 election season. A *Women.com* poll confirms that education was high on the list of female priorities. Not surprisingly, however, women in different life stages are concerned with somewhat different issues. Thus, in the *Women.com* survey, eighteen to twenty-four-year-old women ranked education as the most important issue in the 2000 presidential campaign, while women in their thirties ranked children and family issues number one. Women in the forty to sixty-four age group placed health care concerns first, and senior women ranked Social Security as the most important issue.

AMONG WOMEN with children, polls consistently show that balancing work and family is at the top of the list of concerns. For better or worse, 60 percent of women with children under the age of six now work outside the home. Some work because they have to, others because they enjoy it. But almost all of them find the balance stressful.

I speak from experience when I say that balancing a rewarding professional life with the desire to spend as much time as possible with children is no easy task. I have two small children at home, and I certainly have not found any easy answers. What I have found is that neither the radical feminists nor the radical traditionalists are making efforts to address this central struggle in the lives of most modern women.

Although radical feminists often bemoan the lack of female executives at Fortune 500 companies, they ignore the fact that many professional women choose to get off the treadmill after they have children. Most of the female lawyers I know chose to return to work on a part-time basis after having children. The problem with this is twofold. To begin with, most law firms still view part-time work as "a transition back to full time."

By placing women in ideological straitjackets, both the feminist and traditionalist women's groups have made themselves largely irrelevant.

What the powers-that-be fail to realize, however, is that, as children grow older, they need their mothers around more—not less. Moreover, the resistance of law firms to creating permanent part-time jobs is reinforced by feminists who argue that "Mommy Track" jobs segregate women and deny women equal opportunity. By viewing the small number of women in top posts through the lens of discrimination—instead of through the lens of choice—radical feminists undermine efforts by professional women to develop rewarding (although perhaps not as high-powered) careers, while still taking an active role in parenting.

The feminist view of the problem does not just harm professional women. To the contrary, by focusing their efforts on attaining numerical parity at the top of the pyramid, radical feminists ignore the needs of blue collar and pink collar women—to say nothing of poor women, for whom job training, literacy, or language acquisition surely take precedence over affirmative action in the executive suite.

At the same time, the radical traditionalists sometimes fail to recognize that many women are financially unable to stay home with their children or that many women may actually enjoy spending some time working outside the home.

By placing women in ideological straitjackets, both the feminist and traditionalist women's groups have made themselves largely irrelevant to today's women. Luckily, things are beginning to change.

The failure of women's groups to address adequately work/family issues has been criticized by several prominent women. Several years ago, Professor Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, an Emory University historian and the founder of Emory's Institute for Women's Studies, published a book entitled *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*. In the book, Fox-Genovese weaves together anecdotes from her interviews with women from all walks of life. Her conclusion? Traditionalists and feminists have betrayed modern mothers. "Conservatives," writes Fox-Genovese "talk as if they want to imprison women in motherhood; feminists talk as if they want to liberate women from it."

Fox-Genovese calls for a new kind of feminism—a "family feminism" that would speak more to the one thing that women have in common: the ability to bear children.

As Professor Fox-Genovese has noted, the time is ripe for a third way. ◆

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What's a Traditional Mom, Anyway?

Jill Byington reports from the trenches of the Mommy War.

When I quit work to stay home with my son I was, for the most part, congratulated by my co-workers for making the "traditional" choice. I began to feel a bit like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, hands in the air, leading the entire cast in a rousing chorus of the song "Tradition."

My dictionary defines the word "tradition" as "a mode of thought or behavior followed by a people continuously from generation to generation." By that definition, the fifties' housewife-in-pearls-and-stockings role hardly makes the grade. I was loathe, however, to correct the kind people at my unusually supportive company who were influenced by the powerful modern myth that mothers have always had only two narrow and simplistic choices: being a stay-at-home mother or a mother who goes to work every day. The choice depends in part on whether the mother is a traditionalist or feminist.

Hours of research time, millions of dollars, and miles of newsprint have gone into debating which is the better choice for the woman and the children. The media would have it that mothers on both sides fire salvos across a vast, unbridgeable chasm in what has become known as "The Mommy War."

What I knew when I made my

"Peeling Potatoes" by Edward Steichen, 1923; Reprinted with permission of Joanna T. Steichen

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choice, and what I've never seen mentioned in the media, is that all combatants in this media-hyped "war" are wasting their energy fighting over a side issue. The fact is—and it galls me that this might sound wishy-washy—that in this so-called war both sides are equally right and equally wrong.

The Original "At-home" Mother

Until the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, most mothers in Europe and America not only stayed home to tend children and house, they also did other important work that made a quantifiable financial contribution to the family. They worked side by side with their husbands and their children from their homes in literal cottage industries. The entire family worked to maintain home and business, and the borders between the two were often blurred.

There was a division of labor based on childbearing and strength, but without women, the crops would not have been harvested, food wouldn't have been properly stored for the winter months, and people would not have had clothes to wear.

Entire segments of the economy rested on the capable shoulders of women. The sturdy pioneer women who drove the oxen, slopped the hogs, birthed the babies, and helped found town after town did so not only out of necessity, but out of long, "real" tradition and great skill.

The Original "Working Mother"

During the Industrial Revolution large industries sprang up that were able to manufacture goods more quickly and at a better price than the cottage industries. People left their farms and villages to work in the growing mills, factories, and mines. Sometimes they left by choice; more often they left because the family could no longer support itself at home or in the village. Entire families began to work outside the home because no single job paid a wage that the family could live on, and industries took advantage of tradition, the whole family working side-by-side.

The people who paid the greatest price for industrialization were often women and children who were viewed not as human beings to be cherished but as cheap sources of labor. Unlike the family businesses, mills and factories made no allowances for pregnancy or sickness, and women and children often worked in deplorable conditions.

In this so-called war both sides are equally right and equally wrong.

Children who were too young to work were kept by relatives, if they were fortunate, or they were left at "baby farms." According to author and lecturer Mardi Keyes, these farms (which I think of as daycare from hell) had an infant mortality rate of 60 percent. The choice for poor mothers at the time of the Industrial Revolution was not between in-home or commercial daycare; the choice was often between baby farms and child labor in horrid conditions.

There is no better way to give a sense of what it was like to be a working mother during the early days of industrialism than to quote the words of one who lived it.

Betty Harris was thirty-seven and worked in a coal pit in England during the 1840s. Her account of working conditions is preserved in the parliamentary papers of Great Britain:

I was married at twenty-three, and went into a colliery when I was married. I am a drawer and work from six in the morning to six at night. Stop about an hour at noon to eat my dinner; have bread and butter for dinner; I get no drink. I have two children, but they are too young to work. I worked when I was in the family way. I know a woman who has gone home and washed herself, taken to her bed, delivered of a child, and gone to work again under the week.

I go on my hands and feet. There are six women and about six boys and girls in the pit I work in; it is very hard work for a woman. The pit is very wet where I work, and the water comes over our clog-tops always, and I have seen it up to my thighs; it rains in at the roof terribly. My clothes are wet through almost all day long.

My cousin looks after my children in the daytime. I am very tired when I get home at night; I fall asleep sometimes before I get washed.

The Rise and Fall of the Family Wage

According to Brian Robertson, author of *There's No Place Like Work: How Business, Government, and Our Obsession with Work Have Driven Parents from Home*, it was in reaction to such horrors as Betty Harris described that the leaders of the early women's movement and labor unions began to lobby for a "family wage." This is a wage that allows one parent to sustain the family economically with one income. The

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family wage gradually became a reality, and by the 1960s more than 80 percent of industrial employers paid a wage that could support a family. Thus was born the "traditional" family that we all speak about today—with much of the credit going to proto-feminists.

By 1987, however, the family wage was effectively dead, with only 25 percent of all jobs paying a family wage. What happened in the intervening years to destroy the family wage and send both parents out of the house to seek wages?

The seeds of its destruction were planted at the very moment that people began lobbying for the family wage. During the Victorian era, it was largely the new upper-middle class men who could afford to keep their wives and children at home, usually with servants. It was then that at-home motherhood was raised to a cultural ideal: a symbol of success and superiority. People began to speak with almost religious tones about the helpless, delicate woman at home in need of the support and protection of a man.

There were a lot of nice things about the Victorian era. Who wouldn't want a house with a turret or affordable household help (assuming you weren't the one being the household help)? But the fainting female role was mind-numbing and dull for a large number of women. It also meant poverty for families whose men, though they couldn't earn a family wage, insisted that their wives and daughters stay home to preserve the men's vanity.

Not surprisingly, there was a backlash. Feminists of the 1960s began to denigrate at-home mothers as women who were wasting their brains on the supposedly inferior duties of child rearing. Ironically, instead of following the path of the original women's movement, which sought to cope with industrialization by keeping at least one parent in the home, the new feminists did an unremarked upon about-face and sought again to remove both parents from the home.

Over three short decades millions of women listened and found jobs. Prices as well as people's expectations and definitions of "success" adjusted to dual-income family standards. According to Brian Robertson, "The price of family necessities now reflects an economy in which most wives work."

In a backlash-to-the-backlash, mothers who made the increasingly unpopular choice to stay home also displayed their lack of historical knowledge by declaring their roles to be "traditional"—and the only way to raise children correctly.

Is There a Better Way?

As an at-home mother, I have chosen to view my role as a good way of coping with a flawed society—but not as the only way to cope. I refuse either to be pushed into a mold by the Little-House-on-the-Prairie League or to be intimidated by those who regard a woman who's not climbing the corporate ladder as a loser. I choose to see my role as that of ensuring the best passage through childhood for my son and, in today's economy, that means having a mother at home, particularly for his early years. Any way I twist the research, that is the only rational conclusion I can find.

But I haven't had to give up work. In order to earn money for the family and to have my voice heard, I enjoy working as a freelance writer. Like the sturdy pioneer woman, I have an instinctive need to contribute to the family economy. This need is most likely the reason that a lot of at-home mothers feel guilt and loneliness when home alone with small children all day in neighborhoods emptied by the dual-income mindset.

Oddly—and I say this because some have called my opinions odd—we may be returning to a point where a family economy is again possible. We now have the opportunity to combine the best of the old and the best of the new.

Computers and telecommuting mean that some of us can choose again to stay home and do paid work without going to an office or leaving the children in the care of paid professionals for large segments of their lives. Our children can watch us fill the multiple roles we were meant to fill without some bizarre artifice in which we haul only our daughters to work one day a year. They can see what it means to participate in the family economy and, at the same time, have access to at least one (ideally two) parents all day long. In the best of circumstances our children may even be able to work with us, shoulder to shoulder.

Until we return to some semblance of a family economy—if we ever really do—all mothers must keep a healthy perspective about the difficult choices that people make today. Neither side in the Mommy War can claim it is "traditional" in the true sense of the word; neither has a superior historical claim. It is best to let this manufactured war die in the media and work instead toward the superior choice. ◆

Jill Byington is a Bellevue, Washington, writer whose one constant is that she can count on her creative flow being interrupted regularly by an inquisitive six-year-old son.

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Book Review

Oh, Mom, Poor Mom

Jennifer C. Braceras tells Ann Crittenden to stop whining over the lost earnings of yuppie moms.

The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued by Ann Crittenden. (Metropolitan Books) $25.

A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE in the *New York Times* recently bore this headline: "Women Are Close to Being Majority of Law Students." Yet, instead of focusing on the good news that women made up 49.4 percent of students entering American law schools in the fall of 2000, the *Times* concentrated on "obstacles" to a woman's achieving parity in the legal profession after graduation.

The relatively low number of female judges and partners in major law firms furnished the primary evidence that barriers to women remain. (Women now make up only about 20 percent of the federal bench and around 14 percent of partners in New York law firms.) The *Times* attributed the disproportionately low number of women in these positions, in part, to the burdens of motherhood.

Many women lawyers, of course, enjoy successful careers as in-house corporate counsel, legal policy analysts, law professors, or as attorneys for the government or public interest groups. Such jobs may pay less (and arguably carry less status) than partnerships at large metropolitan firms, but they also require a shorter work week, and usually allow for flexible or reduced-time schedules. Nevertheless, the *Times* portrayed the success of women in these sectors not as cause for celebration, but as cause for concern.

Ann Crittenden, a former reporter at the *Times* and author of a new book that attempts to quantify the costs of child-rearing, shares this concern. In *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued*, Crittenden argues that the decision to become a mother is not only a career-buster, but also the worst possible economic choice for a woman. Crittenden maintains that mothers, particularly well-educated women with high earning capacities, pay a "Mommy Tax" in the form of slowed career advancement and lost earnings. According to Crittenden's calculations, the typical female college graduate forfeits $1 million in lifetime earnings if she has a child.

Exhibit A is Crittenden herself. Before the birth of her son in 1982, Crittenden "lived the unencumbered life of a journalist [and was] one of the boys in a gender-neutral environment that represented enormous progress for women." All that changed when, in her early forties, Crittenden became a mother. After taking maternity leave, she resigned her job at the *Times* to work part-time from home as a freelance journalist. Crittenden estimates that this decision cost her more than $700,000 in lifetime earnings, not to mention the loss of a pension. This, she writes, "seems a high price to pay for doing the right thing."

Reading this section of *The Price of Motherhood*, I could not help but think that Crittenden is a woman who sees her glass as half empty rather than as half full. Since leaving the *Times*, she has not only raised a son, but has authored numerous articles and written several books. Still, Crittenden feels cheated. Her former colleagues don't respect her the way they used to. (Several years after leaving the *Times*, she ran into an acquaintance who jokingly asked, "Didn't you used to be Ann

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Crittenden?") And, of course, she is not earning the salary she would have earned had she continued to work at the *Times*. Apparently, the joys of being a mother and having the professional independence of an author and freelance writer don't compensate for these losses.

Crittenden is correct, of course, that all parents—those who work at home taking care of their families as well as those who are part of the paid labor market—pay a financial price for parenthood. But they also reap extraordinary rewards that are impossible to quantify. This is not to say that our public policy should ignore the needs of families and working parents. To the contrary, Crittenden is right that government should provide the proper incentives for families to flourish. She is also on target when she argues that working mothers should band together to demand more flexible arrangements from employers. But the current state of affairs is not as bleak as Crittenden would have us believe.

Although Crittenden complains that most workplaces are inflexible and unfriendly to mothers, more and more employers are allowing parents to work part-time or to job-share with another part-time employee. Employers have some very real market-based incentives to accommodate motherhood. Women now make up a majority of college graduates. And, as the *Times* article on law students makes clear, women are earning an ever-greater share of professional degrees. Employers who want to attract and retain the best and the brightest will find it to their own advantage to offer schedules and benefits that appeal to women.

Technology is also on our side. A decade ago telecommuting was virtually unheard of, but today we live in a world of fax machines, cell phones, and high speed modems—the advent of which has made it more difficult for employers to deny parents the choice of working from home. In the twenty-first century, the options (at least for college-educated women) seem limitless. Most can choose to work full-time, part-time, or not at all after they have children. And it should be noted that, for all the talk of "stay-at-home Dads" and "Mr. Mom," very few fathers believe that they have as many options as those available to their wives. While Ann Crittenden and the *New York Times* grieve the dearth of female partners at major law firms, most of the male attorneys I know would give their eyeteeth to escape the drudgery of law firm life in favor of part-time government service or public interest work. But, alas, somebody has to pay the mortgage, pay off the law school loans, and put the kids through college.

Crittenden's problem is that, like the newspaper for which she once toiled, she starts from the premise that money and prestige outweigh personal fulfillment and time. But do they? And are these tradeoffs any different for women from what they are for men? A neighbor of mine, a father of two, works as a trader at Fidelity. He knows that he could make more money working as a fund manager, but he prefers the certainty of knowing that when the market closes at 4:00 p.m. he can head home to his family with peace of mind. Is he paying a "Daddy Tax" for his choices? Sure. Does he feel cheated? Of course not. The pleasure of eating dinner with his family is worth more than any company could ever pay him.

The Crittenden Challenge

We'd get an F in ethics if we failed to mention that author Ann Crittenden is hardly a fan of the Independent Women's Forum, which publishes the magazine you are reading.

In The Price of Motherhood, *Crittenden described the IWF as "a conservative antifeminist organization" (not, incidentally, how IWF characterizes itself). Crittenden believes that the IWF exhibited "sheer nerve" in offering the public its finding that when choices and other factors are included, women earn 98 cents on a man's dollar. Feminist organizations like to claim that the wage gap is much wider, painting a bleak picture of the status of women. Crittenden notes that the IWF arrived at the 2-cent gap by comparing young childless women to men.*

But that's the point: It's children who make the difference in women's earnings. IWF and Crittenden are really saying the same thing: Choices about taking time out of the workforce and scaling back a demanding job do affect earnings.

Where the IWF and Crittenden clearly part company, however, is with regard to what is to be done. Crittenden argues for a government-supplied income for mothers—as if we should expect cashiers and cafeteria workers to help foot the bill for well-heeled professional moms like Crittenden. ~The Editors

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Anticipating this critique, Crittenden devotes an entire chapter to debunking the "myth" that women's lives are a product of free choice. "Mothers' choices," Crittenden writes, "are not made in a vacuum. They are made in a world that women never made, according to rules they didn't write." It is here that Crittenden's conspiracy theory emerges: Women lack free will, the patriarchy has rigged the game against us, and anyone who thinks otherwise must be suffering from false consciousness.

Nevertheless, if you can get beyond Crittenden's paranoia and misplaced whining about the lost earnings of yuppie lawyers and journalists, her book makes some worthwhile points. What makes her thesis different from, and more interesting than, that of other writers who have lamented the social and economic cost of parenting, is that she does not believe that women should delegate more of their parenting responsibilities in order to get ahead professionally. To the contrary, Crittenden believes that, for the good of the children and of society, parents should spend more time with their kids and less time working. Crittenden believes that we should accord more prestige to the unpaid labor of caregivers and that society should reward stay-at-home parents for taking care of their families.

Her objectives are praiseworthy. She wants to help mothers both to reduce the number of hours they spend in the paid labor market and to keep more of the money that they earn there. And she wants to prevent mothers who sacrifice economic achievement in order to raise children from being left destitute because of divorce, the death of a spouse, or old age.

Some of Crittenden's specific suggestions for achieving these worthy goals make sense. For example, eliminating the marriage penalty and allowing working women to deduct a significant portion of their child care bills as business expenses are long overdue tax reforms. Providing incentives for businesses to create more part-time jobs and job-sharing arrangements is also a sensible idea that would expand the options available to mothers. (It is unclear, however, whether Crittenden would stop here, as she often waxes poetic about the usual socialist European countries that mandate part-time arrangements by government fiat.)

More controversial, but worthy of serious discussion, are Crittenden's proposals to allow stay-at-home parents to claim Social Security credits for time spent raising children and her idea that the government should create job preferences for parents re-entering the paid workforce after a prolonged absence for child-rearing, much in the way that the GI bill created preferences for veterans after World War II.

But several of Crittenden's ideas—including one that stay-at-home parents be allowed to tap into the workers' compensation system every time they are injured "on the job"—are downright silly. Years after President Clinton supposedly "ended welfare as we know it," Crittenden would bring back many of the social ills that accompanied it by requiring that the government pay every primary caregiver of young children a stipend (or a "salary," as she calls it). This proposal has many obvious flaws, not the least of which are the perverse incentives it creates and the effect it would have on the teenage pregnancy rate. Likewise, Crittenden's suggestion that the government require employers to provide all parents with paid leave for an entire year is undermined by the experience of many women, including Crittenden herself, who take their employer's money only to quit at the end of their leave.

As important as the proposals that Crittenden endorses are those that she fails to discuss. Thus, while she is indignant that wealthy socialites are not automatically entitled to 50 percent of their husband's income upon divorce (even when the woman caused the marriage to break up), Crittenden makes no mention of the movement to reform the no-fault divorce laws which have contributed significantly to the rate of poverty among divorced women. Moreover, Crittenden neglects to mention congressional proposals to modify the federal Fair Labor Standards Act to allow employees to select time off (or "comp time") instead of additional pay for overtime work. And she virtually ignores the concepts of maternity IRAs and additional tax breaks for home businesses, both of which would benefit many mothers without unduly burdening business.

As these examples illustrate, Crittenden routinely endorses big government solutions while failing to consider more market-oriented reforms. At times, Crittenden is so utopian that she literally lapses into a familiar "why can't America be more like Sweden" mantra that trivializes many of the significant issues she identifies.

Yet, despite its shortcomings, *The Price of Motherhood* is a valuable contribution to the debate about family values and the role of women in society. If nothing else, it is refreshing to see a feminist fellow-traveler acknowledge that there is, indeed, an innate value in motherhood. And Crittenden's central premise, that we should work to restore respect for motherhood and increase the range of choices available to all parents, is one with which most Americans should agree. Now all we need to do is sort out the details. ◆

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Henpecked on the Hill

Christine Stolba says the folks on Capitol Hill are running scared when it comes to women. That fear costs us a lot of money.

Would Barbra Streisand or Rosie O'Donnell be willing to dig deep into their own pockets to support feminist ideals—and, indeed, even feminists themselves—if financial support from the federal government dried up? I doubt it. Feminist organizations are, according to policy historians Joyce Gelb and Marian Palley, far more dependent on federal largesse than most interest groups—in part because of their declining membership rolls over the years.

Although the amount of money these organizations siphon from the federal well is comparatively small—the National Organization for Women's (NOW) Legal Defense and Education Fund received $394,682 in government grants for fiscal year 1998, for example—it adds up.

Congress is now considering the "Getting Our Girls Ready for the 21st Century Act"—or, the "Go Girl" Act, as it is called. Sponsored by Rep. Lynn Woolsey, a California Democrat, it would spend $50 million "to encourage girls to pursue studies in and careers in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology."

While nobody wants to hinder a woman from becoming an engineer or scientist, it should be noted that the wording in this bill reads like a feminist playbook. The $50 million would be given out in grants to "local educational agencies on behalf of elementary and secondary schools," meaning that your local chapter of NOW—an "educational" organization—could soon be putting "Go Girl" grants to work in your child's elementary school.

Not surprisingly, the Clinton years were good to the feminist establishment, which saw those sympathetic to their positions move into important jobs and successfully add programs that, like kudzu—the quietly aggressive southern vine—now wend their way through federal agencies. Will a Republican administration spell trouble for these programs? Not as much as you might think.

President George W. Bush had the gumption to end one notable Clinton-era political payoff: the White House

Drawing by Dusan Petricic

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KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri

Fun at Home

YOUNG PEOPLE have moved closer to older people in the rejection of extramarital sexual relations. Fifty-seven percent of eighteen to twenty-four year olds told interviewers for the National Opinion Research Center in the 1970s that extramarital sex was always wrong. In the 1990s data, 81 percent of them said it was always wrong. The opposition of older age groups remained high and steady throughout the period. On this issue there is no generation gap today.

Mind the Gap

ACROSS THE POND in Britain, pollsters and pols have been sizing up the gender gap. According to Roger Mortimore of Market Opinion & Research International, "up to the mid 1980s, the gender gap [in Britain] was very wide." But it didn't look like the U.S. gap where women leaned more to the left than men. In Britain, women were much more likely to vote Conservative than were men and much less likely to vote Labour. In the 1987, 1992, 1997, and 2001 elections the gap narrowed.

But I'm Getting a Pedicure

IT MAY NOT BE KOSHER to ask, but inquiring minds want to know: Are men more amenable than women to longer hours on the job? Answers to the question in a March ABC poll about whether working longer hours is worth it split sharply along gender lines. Fifty-four percent of men, but only 39 percent of women agreed that "working longer hours is worth it because it produces prosperity." Forty-two percent of men, but 58 percent of women felt working more wasn't worth it "because it creates stress and lack of time." More women than men describe their work as "just a job," and not "a career." ◆

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Women's Office—a bureau that appears to have spent its days churning out giddy press releases about Women's History Month or Take Our Daughters to Work Day. But efforts to curtail other pork barrel projects routinely bring out the wimp in legislators.

A case in point was a failed attempt earlier this year to eliminate the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, an appropriations bill. Under WEEA, the government funds feminist groups that promote such school activities as gender equity "scavenger hunts"—to the tune of $100 million over the past few years.

WEEA may have looked like a sitting duck in a Republican-controlled Congress, but it easily found its way back into the education bill. According to Krista Kafer, an education policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, this happened because members of Congress—male and female, Democrat and Republican—fear being seen as hostile to women.

This spirit is evident throughout the federal agencies as well. A brief trip through the bureaucratic bowels of our federal departments reveals many feminist follies, the sheer number (and silliness) of which is staggering:

- At the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), not normally thought of as a bastion of gender politics, taxpayers are coughing up money to "provide agricultural science career role models for young women." How might the USDA succeed in doing this? Mainly by "making efforts to portray women in non-stereotypical roles" in the agency's information and outreach materials.
- Over at the Department of Transportation (DOT), taxpayer dollars are being spent on the agency's "Women in Construction Initiative," an effort to

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"provide opportunities for women in highway construction trades." The agency also boasts a Task Force on Women's Issues in Transportation. Those issues are largely left undefined, though mention is made in DOT literature of research into "women's travel issues" and "women's mobility."

- The National Science Foundation funds "The Poster Project," a UCLA-based effort to use "visual means to challenge stereotypes" and "change the intellectual and emotional climate surrounding the idea of scientific research" by girls and women. Posters celebrating female mathematicians are emblazoned with slogans such as "Imagine all the possible ways we can use geometry to describe spatial realities."

If there is a unifying theme to the many "women-oriented" programs in place throughout the federal agencies, it is the need for female empowerment and self-esteem—all at taxpayer expense. At the Department of Education funds are devoted to helping "at-risk girls" deal with "peer pressure" and improve their sense of self-esteem in public schools. Though not an unworthy end in itself, it should cause concern that these programs begin from the assumption that girls are victims of a society that treats them badly.

Gender sensitivity is also part of the to-do list of the department's administration of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, which requires that states "appoint a sex equity coordinator to oversee gender equity in vocational training programs." The act also decrees the states spend $150,000 each "for nontraditional training and employment for jobs in which one gender comprises less than 25 percent of individuals employed by occupations."

Internally, the Department of Education is no less vigilant in its pursuit of gender equity. The department employs a full-time gender warden—the Special Assistant for Gender Equity—who, since 1995, has been charged with doling out grants to "support the training of teachers in gender-sensitive methodology and instructional strategies that take advantage of the differences in perception, motivation, and cultural styles of male and female students." Between 1995 and 2000, the folks at Education also spent more than $7 million a year on "Equity Assistance Centers" that "help school districts to identify and correct practices that discriminate between boys and girls."

A perusal of the department's published materials turns up workbooks with such intriguing titles as "Making It Happen: Pizza Parties, Chemistry Goddesses, and Other Strategies that Work for Girls and Others."

The self-esteem mania has spread to other agencies as well. At the Department of Agriculture, officials are required to do more than make sure the world is safe for female aggies. In recent years, the agency has pledged to "incorporate more entry level, esteem-building employment opportunities into USDA programs and activities." Their friends at the National Park Service have done one better: They launched a program called "Women Implementing New Goals Successfully"—whose uplifting acronym is "WINGS."

The goal of WINGS is to "educate and enhance the development of professional, emotional, and personal growth of female employees" through the creation of workshops and support groups for Park Service employees.

Even the Department of Energy (DOE) is energetically fighting stereotypes. In 1997, the DOE's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory started a monthly seminar series "to address the special concerns and needs of women." Women at DOE "feel isolated or disconnected from their colleagues," the series literature claims, and thus require specially organized (and specially funded) programs to build confidence and connections.

One area garners a disproportionate share of government grant monies: female feelings about math and science. Fewer women than men enter math and science-related fields. Common sense suggests that this is an example of women's preferences for certain endeavors over others. But for feminists—and now, for the federal government—the gender gap in math and science is a "problem" to be solved by more pork barrel programs.

The aforementioned Poster Project at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is merely a questionable undertaking. A sillier waste of federal funds can be found in the NSF-sponsored program called "Eyes to the Future: Middle School Girls Envisioning Science and Technology in High School and Beyond." The girls in this program are supposed to be envisioning future careers in science by constructing a webzine (with the girl-power title, "Speak Out!"). What they appear to be doing instead is goofing off.

Contributors to the 'zine include "Anna," who says that "the things I like to do after school is [*sic*] hang with friends and just chill.... I think that high school is going to be cool." As an afterthought, she notes that "I definetly [*sic*] think girls should go into science." Another future physicist waxes rhapsodic on her love of Eminem and Limp Bizkit. Eighth-grader "Marianne" describes her ambition of becoming a fashion designer.

NSF has other self-esteem-building science projects. Lest one think NSF

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missed even the most obscure potential grantees, they gave $874,800 to fund "Agents for Change: Robotics for Girls," a summer program to encourage the nation's young women to build robots.

At the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), where there is concern about the "alarmingly low" number of women pursuing science degrees, employees have created partnerships with groups such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW)—sponsor of the methodologically flawed study, "How Schools Shortchange Girls."

NASA sponsors a women's website whose theme—"There's space in my life"—flows across the home page in a flowery font. The site features a special "herstory" section about fearless female aviatrixes and aeronautical engineers, as well as diet and exercise pointers from astronauts. The touchy-feely tone shows that NASA's "research and technology is not just about distant galaxies, astronauts, and supersonic aircraft." Clearly, it's about how we feel.

On the "Young Women of NASA Advisory Council" page of the website, for example, members keep "Adventure Journals" and draw inspiration from a prominently displayed quotation by faux-spiritualism guru Marianne Williamson, whose oeuvre includes such titles as *Enchanted Love: The Mystical Power of Intimate Relationships.* "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate," the Williamson quotation reads. "Our deepest fear is that we are all powerful beyond measure." If NASA's intent is the Oprahfication of outer space, it is well on its way to success. Worries over the representation of women in math and science echo larger concerns over occupational segregation. Occupational segregation—the tendency for men and women to gravitate to certain fields—has long bothered feminists, who view

If NASA's intent is the Oprahfication of outer space, it is well on its way to success.

it as further evidence of discrimination against women. Now federal bureaucrats are fretting over it.

For example, at the Department of Labor, the Women's Bureau is attempting to end the evils of occupational segregation by funding "nontraditional" job training programs for women and offering a monthly feature on "Nontraditional Occupations" on the agency's web site. A recent offering featured Colleen Muldoon, a bricklayer, who "liked the freedom and comradery" of her job but found that "the work itself was grueling." Unable to handle the pressures of the bricklaying patriarchy, Colleen "burned out and decided to get out" of the field. She moved on to a desk job at the International Masonry Institute, where, oddly given her own experience, she "heads up a task force to recruit and retain women bricklayers."

Although antidiscrimination laws already on the books ensure that jobs are open to all applicants regardless of sex, Congress continues unnecessary legislation such as the "Women in Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Occupations Act of 1992," otherwise known as WANTO. WANTO grants give money to labor unions such as the Minnesota Teamsters, as well as to automobile dealers associations "to recruit and retain women in the auto repair industry." Next time you take your car to the garage for a tune-up, look around for those WANTO women!

Even the U.S. Geological Survey (part of the Department of the Interior) has spent half a million dollars every year since 1991 to augment already existing recruitment efforts for women. As part of their Human Resources Initiative, they provide female employees "with the opportunity to participate in local and national women's organizations for the purpose of addressing and resolving women's career issues." A related division of Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has crafted a "Vision for Diversity," which holds managers at the agency "responsible for increasing the presence of women" within the service's ranks.

Many government agencies proudly trumpet their partnerships with feminist groups. The Department of Labor's "Women's Outreach Program," created in 1996, boasts of having worked with "major women's advocacy" groups, including NOW and the National Committee on Pay Equity—the latter an organization that uses misleading data about the gender wage gap to call for more regulation of the economy on behalf of women.

BESIDES THE CONSIDERABLE amount of money wasted on programs like these, there is the further problem that they often become permanent, resource-gobbling activities for federal agencies.

The Bush administration has an opportunity to take a serious look at these follies. But in a town where it is anathema to be perceived, however unfairly, as anti-girl, the end is not in sight. Unfortunately, Barbra and Rosie will not be asked to put their money where their mouths are.

Not when ours is available. ◆

Christine Stolba is a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum.

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I'm Not Picky

Marta Hummel on guys who think right but date wrong

BEING CONSERVATIVE is in again, or at least grudgingly accepted by those who set the tone in New York and Washington. While happy about this cultural shift, I am less than mesmerized by right-wing men.

You can't say I haven't tried. Upon moving to New York two years ago, I started regularly attending the Manhattan Institute's Fabiani Society meetings, an epicenter for the twenty-to-thirty-something male conservative. Not your usual dating mecca, but a good place for a woman who prefers *Wall Street Journal* op-eds to *Cosmopolitan.*

At first glance, the disproportionately male confab would seem a perfect fit for me. These guys groove to my inexplicable, almost genetic understanding of Friedrich Hayek's philosophy of limited spheres of knowledge and share my proclivity to bring up natural law theory over waffles early on Saturday mornings.

But a closer look reveals the truth. When not reveling in moral superiority over Jesse Jackson's latest love child, deconstructing Ayn Rand's theory of art, or heartily endorsing the professional qualities of another Baywatch-cum-Fox News anchor, these guys can't communicate. It is as if Bill O'Reilly of "The O'Reilly Factor" were their dating mentor: Invite the other side over, but cut them off, talk at them, and gloat publicly as a wrap up.

They burble with, "Hey, can I get you a drink?" —empty gallantry because the booze is free here. But you can forget about drinks or dinner afterwards: This crowd prefers the complimentary smorgasbord and bar.

And then the suits: The aspiring journalists and politicos go in for the Men's Wearhouse look: The shiny wool-blend kind worn with a nubby polyester tie, belt below the gut. When really pushing the sartorial envelope, this type opts for a pastel sweater vest/tweed jacket combo. Here they closely resemble their Naderite brethren of the left—thrift and a low social IQ combining with bad taste and body fat of Häagen-Dazs levels.

The lawyers and bankers spend more, but with little effect. Brooks Brothers tailoring is ruined by goopy-gelled hair and Gordon Gekko—from the movie *Wall Street*—predatory stances. A few in this crowd smoke conspicuously, as if even here, in the inner sanctum of the conservative temple, they take pride in blaspheming the liberal establishment. At least the latter wouldn't blow smoke in my face.

While I still hold out a modicum of hope that love and philosophy can mix, evidence to the contrary has reached critical mass. A sampling of my forays into the world of right-wing dating:

Aspiring Talk Show Host: A frustrated investment banker with dreams of captaining his own talk show, he spent down-time constructing arguments against imaginary liberal guests. He often practiced putdowns—with full gesticulation—at eateries on the Upper East Side. Like Dostoyevsky's disturbed character in *Notes from the Underground,* he was tormented by fantasy slights.

Creepy Math Geek: This fortyish, disheveled economics researcher cut through the after-speaker crowd to compliment me on my "biting" query during the Q&A. After I declined his request for my number, he good-naturedly gave me his card and told me to look him up. Easy exit, or so I thought. After one week, a dozen or so emails and three phone calls at work, I was slightly nonplused. I had only introduced myself with my first name and mentioned vaguely that I was in advertising.

Faux Gent: This southern string salesman turned big city fund manager walked on the outside of the sidewalk, paid for everything, and on our first date opined that "green tea really clears the pipes, doesn't it?" as I was leaving the table for the ladies room. Sucker that I am for a congenital door-opener, and scatologically tolerant after years of my brother's gross jibes, I valiantly hung on until I could stand it no longer.

I don't know what it is that I am looking for, but right-wingers work like Zoloft on my libido. And without being able to jump ship to the left, I can only hope that some of George W. Bush's affability will rub off on them. ◆

Marta Hummel is a writer living in Manhattan.

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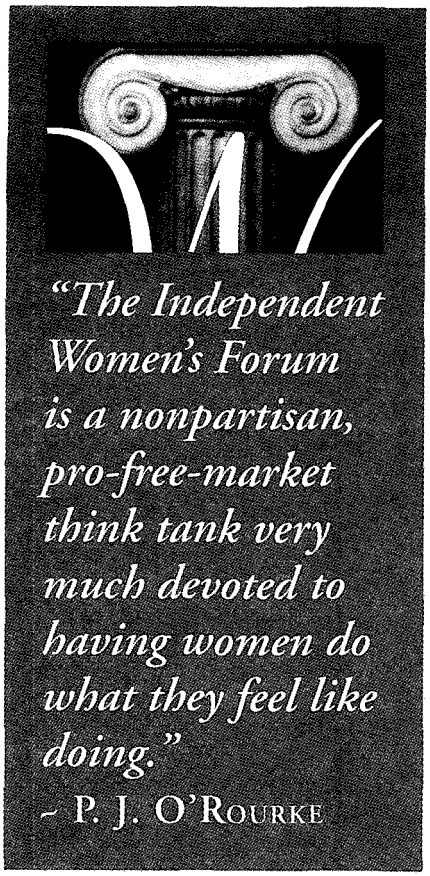
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